

CLAIMS

1. A method for password-based authentication in a communication system comprising a group (100) of at least two units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92) associated with a common password, **characterized by** the steps of
- 5 assigning individual authentication tokens to the respective units in the group based on the password such that each authentication token is irreversibly determined by the password;
- determining, at a first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), a check token for a
- 10 second unit (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on the password and the authentication token of the first unit; and
- comparing, at the second unit, the check token with the authentication token of the second unit for authentication of the first unit towards the second unit.
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2. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** the further step of
- deleting the password and all significant parameters generated in the authentication procedure except the authentication tokens after usage thereof.
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3. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** the further step of
- accepting, at the second unit (42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) and in response to a successful authentication, update information securely transferred from the first unit (42-1; 52-2; 92-1), at least a portion of the update information being created at the first unit.
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4. The method of claim 3, **characterized in that** the update information is associated with revocation of a non-trusted group member.
5. The method of claim 3, **characterized in that** the update information
- 30 relates to a password change.
6. The method of claim 3, **characterized in that** the update information is selected from the group of: new authentication tokens, a new group key, a

group-defining list, and a revocation list (45; 55; 95), including combinations thereof.

7. The method of claim 3, **characterized by** delegation of update rights to a
5 third intermediate unit (92-2, 92-3), and sending at least a portion of the
update information for the second unit (92-4) to the intermediate unit.

8. The method of claim 7, **characterized in that** the update information is
accompanied by a time stamp for determining whether the update information
10 is still valid when the intermediate unit (92-2, 92-3) encounters the second
unit (92-4).

9. The method of claim 7, **characterized in that** the delegation of update
rights comprises delegation of rights to further delegate update rights.

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10. The method of claim 1, **characterized in that** the assigning step in turn
comprises the steps of

determining, at an assigning unit (72-1; 82-2) in the group, a token secret
common for the group and non-correlated with the password; and

20 creating, at the assigning unit, the authentication token for another unit
(72-2, 72-3; 82-4) in the group based on the token secret and the password.

11. The method of claim 10, **characterized in that** the step of determining
the token secret involves generating the token secret, as a part of an initial
25 set-up procedure.

12. The method of claim 1, **characterized in that** the step of determining the
check token in turn comprises the steps of

30 retrieving, at the first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), the token secret using
the authentication token of the first unit and the password; and

creating, at the first unit, the check token for the second unit (32-2; 42-2;
52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on the token secret and the password.

13. The method of claim 10 or 12, **characterized in that** the creating step involves using a bijective locking function, the input parameters of which include the token secret and a one-way function of the password.

5 14. The method of claim 13, **characterized in that** the locking function is a symmetric encryption function.

15. The method of claim 13, **characterized in that** the locking function is implemented through password-based secret sharing.

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16. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** implementing policies in at least one of the units in the group for limiting the number and/or frequency of authentication attempts.

15 17. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** the further step of generating an alarm signal if the number of authentication attempts exceeds a predetermined value.

18. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** the further step of sending an authentication response message (34; 44; 94) from the second unit (32-2; 42-2; 92-4) indicating the result of the comparing step.

19. The method of claim 1, **characterized by** further authentication of the second unit (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) towards the first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), whereby the first and second units are mutually authenticated towards each other.

20. The method of claim 19, **characterized by** the steps of:
generating a respective random value at the first and second unit;
30 determining temporary test secrets at the first and second unit based on the random values; and
exchanging the temporary test secrets between the first and second unit for mutual authentication purposes.

21. The method of claim 1, **characterized in that** critical operations for which authentication is needed are listed in policies in at least one of the units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92).

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22. The method of claim 3, **characterized in that** a unit (42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) that is switched-on after being inactive for a predetermined period of time automatically requests appropriate update information from at least two other units.

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23. The method of claim 1, **characterized in that** the group (100) of units constitutes a Personal Area Network (PAN).

24. The method of claim 1, **characterized in that** the authentication tokens
15 are tamper-resistantly stored in the respective units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92).

25. A communication system including a group (100) of at least two units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92) associated with a common password, and
20 means for password-based authentication, **characterized by**

means for assigning individual authentication tokens to the respective units in the group based on the password such that each authentication token is irreversibly determined by the password;

25 means for determining, at a first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), a check token for a second unit (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on the password and the authentication token of the first unit; and

means for comparing, at the second unit, the check token with the authentication token of the second unit for authentication of the first unit towards the second unit.

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26. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** further comprising

means for deleting the password and parameters generated in the authentication procedure except the authentication tokens after usage thereof.

27. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** further comprising
means for transferring update information from the first unit (42-1; 52-
2; 92-1) to the second unit (42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4); and

5 means for accepting, at the second unit, update information from the first
unit in response to a successful authentication.

28. The system of claim 27, **characterized in that** the update information is
associated with revocation of a non-trusted group member.

10 29. The system of claim 27, **characterized in that** the update information
relates to a password change.

30. The system of claim 27, **characterized in that** the update information is
15 selected from the group of: new authentication tokens, a new group key, a
group-defining list, and a revocation list (45; 55; 95), including combinations
thereof.

31. The system of claim 27, **characterized by** means for delegation of update
20 rights to a third intermediate unit (92-2, 92-3), and means for sending at least
a portion of the update information for the second unit (92-4) to the
intermediate unit.

32. The system of claim 25, **characterized in that** the means for assigning in
25 turn comprises

means for determining, at an assigning unit (72-1; 82-2) in the group, a
token secret common for the group and non-correlated with the password;
and

30 means for creating, at the assigning unit, the authentication token for
another unit (72-2, 72-3; 82-4) in the group based on the token secret and the
password.

33. The system of claim 25, **characterized in that** the means for determining the check token in turn comprises

means for retrieving, at the first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), the token secret using the authentication token of the first unit and the password; and

5 means for creating, at the first unit, the check token for the second unit (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on the token secret and the password.

10 34. The system of claim 32 or 33, **characterized in that** the means for creating involves a bijective locking function, the input parameters of which include the token secret and a one-way function of the password.

15 35. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** policies implemented in at least one of the units in the group for limiting the number and/or frequency of authentication attempts.

20 36. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** further comprising means for generating an alarm signal if the number of authentication attempts exceeds a predetermined value.

37. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** further comprising means for sending an authentication response message (34; 44; 94) from the second unit (34-2; 42-2; 92-4).

25 38. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** further comprising means for mutual authentication between two units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92) in the group.

30 39. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** policies defining critical operations for which authentication is needed.

40. The system of claim 25, **characterized by** being a Personal Area Network (PAN).

41. A device (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92) belonging to a group (100) of at least two devices associated with a common password, and comprising means for password-based authentication, **characterized in that** this first device
5 comprises:

means for receiving a password;

means for assigning individual authentication tokens to other devices (72-2, 72-3; 82-4) in the group based on the password such that each authentication token is irreversibly determined by the password;

10 means for determining a check token for a second device (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) in the group based on the password and the authentication token of the first device (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1); and

means for transmitting the check token to the second device for authentication towards the second device.

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42. The device of claim 41, **characterized by** further comprising

means for deleting the password and parameters generated in the authentication procedure except the authentication token after usage thereof.

20 43. The device of claim 41, **characterized by** further comprising

means for creating update information for the second device (42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4); and

means for securely transferring update information to the second device.

25 44. The device of claim 43, **characterized by** means for delegation of update rights to an intermediate device (92-2, 92-3), and means for sending update information for the second device (92-4) to the intermediate device.

30 45. The device of claim 41, **characterized in that** the means for assigning in turn comprises

means for determining a token secret common for the group (100) and non-correlated with the password; and

means for creating the authentication token for another device (72-2, 72-3; 82-4) in the group based on the token secret and the password.

46. The device of claim 41, **characterized in that** the means for determining
5 the check token in turn comprises

means for retrieving the token secret using the authentication token of the first device (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1) and the password; and

means for creating the check token for the second device (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on the token secret and the password.

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47. A computer program product for, when executed by a computer, password-based authentication in a communication system comprising a group (100) of at least two units (12; 22; 32; 42; 52; 72; 82; 92) associated with a common password, **characterized by**

15 program means for assigning individual authentication tokens to the respective units of the group based on the password such that each authentication token is irreversibly determined by the password;

program means for determining, at a first unit (32-1; 42-1; 52-2; 92-1), a check token for a second unit (32-2; 42-2; 52-1, 52-3, 52-4; 92-4) based on
20 the password and the authentication token of the first unit; and

program means for comparing, at the second unit, the check token with the authentication token of the second unit for authentication of the first unit towards the second unit.

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